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The voice of the Darjeeling Hills

Himalayan Times



Land Rights to the Tea and Cinchona Plantation Workers

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&
TELANGANA**

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&

TELANGANA STATES OF CONFUSION

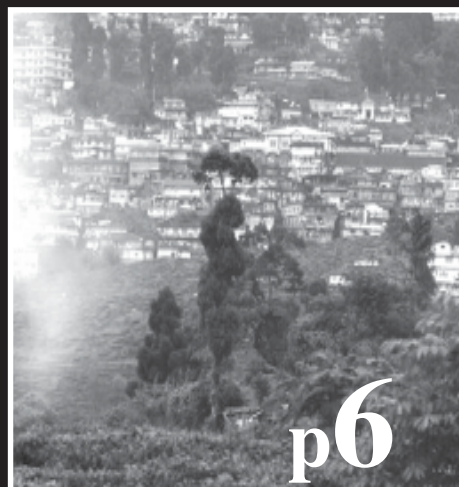
By Sandip C. Jain

———— p23 A Through Man

Dr. R.K.Sprigg

By Dr. S.B.Wangyel

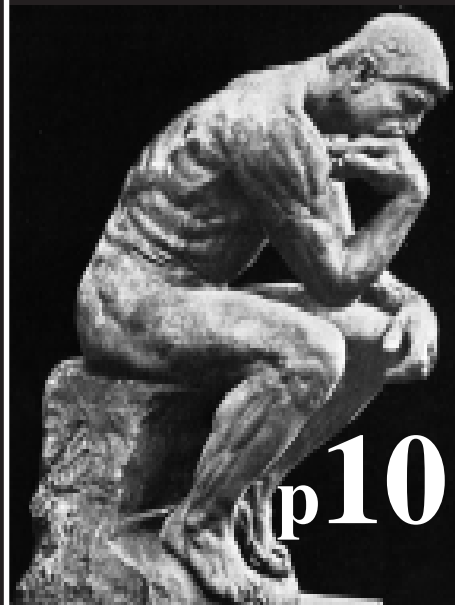
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EDITORIAL

Sandip C. Jain



States of Confusion

Whether the dramatic green signal shown by the otherwise honourable Union Minister for Home Affairs Mr.P.Chidarambaram to the people of the Telangana region for their demand of re-de-merger, will actually translate into the creation of the twenty-ninth state of the Indian Union or whether it will turn out to be one of the biggest con acts pulled out in the Political history of Independent India, still remain a part of the next Act. Only time will tell whether a new state of Telngana will become a reality or whether the midnight assurance given by the Government of India to the Telangana Rastriya Samity was just a ploy to make its supremo K.Chandrashekhara Rao withdraw his 11 days hunger strikes. Telangana's fate appears as hazy and shrouded in mystery as the policies of the Central government in matters relating to creation of new states in India.

For the time being of course, all it has managed to do is to set ablaze all the three regions of Andhra Pradesh, (Telangana, Rayalaseema and Coastal Andhra Pradesh) which now the Central Government and the Congress Party in particular will find extremely different to extinguish and even if it somehow manages to bring this raging inferno into control, it will only do so at the expense of being severely scalded itself.

But one thing is for sure, the knee-jerk reactions of Central Government in dealing with the latest crisis in Telangana has very surly managed to open that Pandora's box which both the Central Government as well as several State Government have been trying to keep tightly shut ever since Independence. Ever since Independent India took shape, demands for separate states have periodically erupted across the length & breadth of the country. Gorkhaland, Bundelkhand, Harit Pradesh, Mithalanchal, Vidharba, Boroland, Bhojpur, Kodagu, Maru Pradesh and Poorvanchal, to name a few, have time and again, erupted with demand of a separate state. Some of them date back a long long time. Gorkhaland being one such, tracing its origin back to a petition submitted before the Officers of the East India Co;



But one thing is for sure, the knee-jerk reactions of Central Government in dealing with the latest crisis in Telangana has very surly managed to open that Pandora's box which both the Central Government as well as several State Government have been trying to keep tightly shut ever since Independence. Ever since Independent India took shape, demands for separate states have periodically erupted across the length & breadth of the country.

requesting for "Separate Administrative set-ups" between Bengal and the Darjeeling Hills. History of Independent India has proved that once born these demands persist despite the Central and State government trying their best to quell these legitimate demands, sometimes through interim measures, as in the case of DGHC and Boroland Councils but mostly through the sheer might of the stick. Then again certain statehood demands like those in Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand and Uttarakhand have been conceded much to the disappointment and anguish of the other aspirants, and also providing a fresh lease of life to those demands which are overlooked.

The midnight green signal given by Chidambaram to the TRS for the demerger of the Telangana from Andhra Pradesh has done precisely the same, acting like a can of gasoline poured atop a smouldering log. The demand for Gorkhaland is once again now back on center stage. While the two demands, Telangana & Gorkhaland, might appear on surface to be similar, the fact is that the demand for Telangana is for re-demerger from Andhra Pradesh while the demand in the Darjeeling Hills is only for demerger from Bengal.

The fact is that Telangana was actually a separate state for more than eight years after India gained Independence before being merged with Andhra Pradesh in 1955. The history is that immediately after Independence when the various states were created, there neither was a state called Tamil Nadu nor a state called Andhra Pradesh. In 1953 a Telegu, Potti Sriramula, supporting the demand by the Telegu speaking people in the state of Madras, for the creation of a separate state for themselves, went on a fast on to death. His death sparked off spontaneous protests all over the state, thereby resulting in the creation of Andhra Pradesh with nine coastal district of Madras, north of present day Chennai and four districts of Rayalaseema with its capital in Kurnoor. This in effect meant that two Telegu speaking State come to be in existence in India, one the newly created Andhra Pradesh and the other the State of Hyderabad which was under the Nizams prior to Independence. This state of Hyderabad is roughly the area of today's Telangana. The first S.R.C (1953) or the Fazul Ali Commission, as it was popularly called, also recommended that despite the two states sharing the same languages they should remain as separate states. But Jawaharlal Nehru unmindful of this recommendation as well as of the massive protests in the Telangana region, in 1956, announced the merger of the states of Hyderabad and Andhra Pradesh, thereby forming the present day Andhra Pradesh. The present agitation and demand for demerger of Telangana started from that very day on, 1st Nov 1956, when the state of present day Andhra Pradesh was inaugurated. This announcement by Chidambaram was an effort to correct this 53 years old injustice.

This therefore is the fundamental difference between the demands made in Telangana and the one in the Darjeeling Hills. But there is no denying the fact that the demand for statehood in the Darjeeling Hills is as legitimate and as constitutional as the one in Telangana. Darjeeling Hills was a part of Sikkim and became a portion of Bengal only by default after having served several masters. Even after it was attached to the Bengal Province during pre-Independence days, the Darjeeling Hills were governed by separate set of rules than those which governed the rest of Bengal. So why does Bengal always respond with just this patent line "*Bongallay Bibhajan hobayna*" whenever confronted with the question of separation of Darjeeling from it?? "*Kano Hobayna*"?? They don't have any answer to this. And the Central Government too seems least bothered, fueling much resentment amongst the lenders & followers of the Gorkhaland Movement.

Several many researches have made findings that given the size and diversity of India it would only be practical for India to be divided into smaller sized states, which as experience has shown, are better government and more manageable than larger states. Sikkim, Delhi, Haryana, Goa and others have proved this already. The Indian Constitution too has empowered the Parliament vide its Article 3(a) to "*form a new state by separation of territory from any state or by uniting two or more states or parts of states by uniting any territory to a part of any state*".

Why then or what then is it which makes the creation of new states in India such a big and complex issue?? Actually a weak and indecisive Central Government appears to be the main culprit. And to camouflage its weakness, all it does is create further confusions with regards to its policies for granting statehood. With no clear cut policies or guidelines set in place by the Central government and no transparent criteria visible, several many aspirants are compared to believe that the Central Government only understands the language of violence.

Lets hope that the leaders of this hitherto fairly peaceful Movement for Gorkhaland too don't fall into this trap this time around too. ■

Presently one of the critical issues facing India is to bring the plantation and the nearby rural areas to the mainstream of economic development. This will involve strategies to provide electricity, water supply, good housing, sanitation, education facilities and job opportunities.

David Landes has said in *Unbound Prometheus*, “the decision of certain European Powers ... to establish ‘plantations,’ that is to treat their colonies as continuous enterprises was whatever one may think of morality, a momentous innovation”. Natural resource extraction propelled colonial expansion across the globe. To do this the British cleared massive tracts of forests for their tea plantations and railroads.

The pursuit of profit, the building of the Empire and social apartheid together created the tea plantation industry of Darjeeling, Dooars and Terai. These tea plantations were developed on the much maligned economic theory based on exploitation – of the land, environment and the lesser or subject races. Spaces in the plantation were and still are meticulously charted, spoken for, inhabited by a hierarchy of master subject personages.

The plantation industry was structured to ensure the transfer of resources away from the plantation industry. This system ensured that the profit generated has rarely been ploughed back to develop these plantations. The only time capital was invested was when these plantations were being developed in Colonial British India. From then till today capital has always flowed out from the region.

The challenge now is to transform this economic theory based on exploitation into one that is based on partnership. This transformation will benefit all stakeholders in the value chain. In the process finally offer the plantation society the opportunity to move out from the social and economic class they are born into.

Surprisingly even after 62 years of Independence, nothing in the structure that govern the tea plantations has changed from the manner they were created during colonial times. Nothing has changed especially in the field of ideas. The structure and management of the plantations and the laws that have been implemented after independence are based on the same colonial pattern and ideas. The people working and living in the plantations have got further marginalized for the booming mainstream Indian economy. Independence has not brought the plantation workers and their families the much desired social and economic benefits. They have only got the right to vote. Even today none of the central government rural development schemes can be directly applied to the plantation villages.

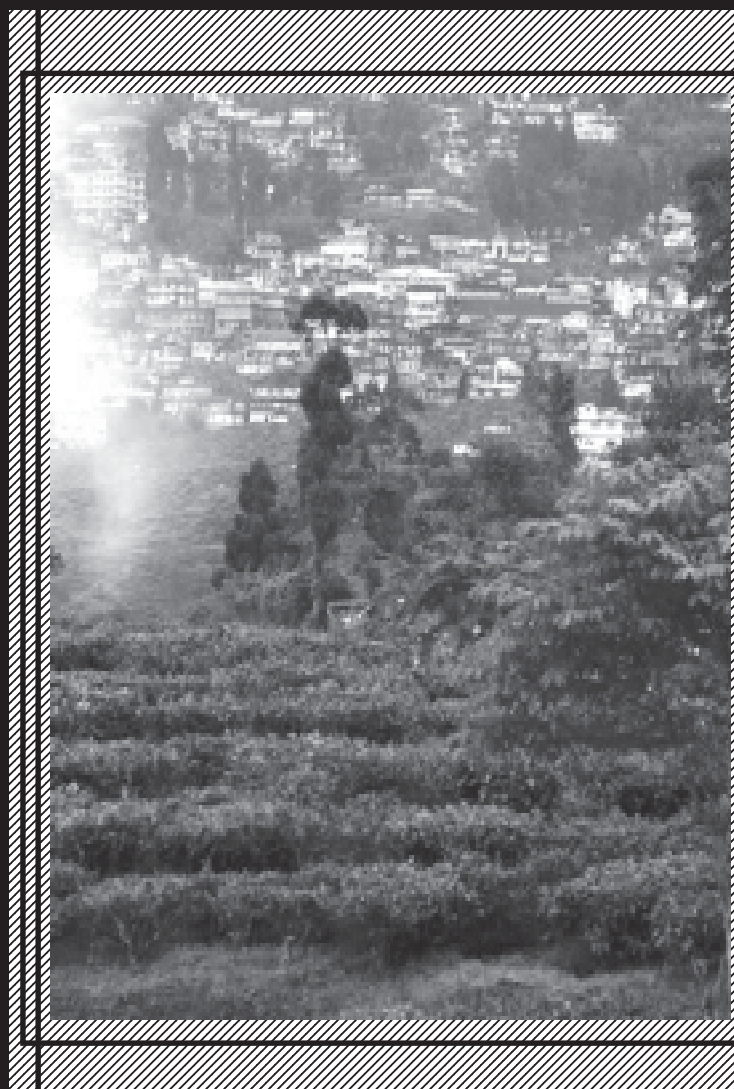
Post- Independence

After India became Independent, it initiated a host of laws to govern the working of the Tea plantations. The present legislations that govern this industry are old, most of them being enacted immediately after independence keeping in view the situation prevailing at that time. Economic reforms and globalization have thrown new challenges before this industry. We have seen starvation deaths in DOOARS when the tea gardens were abandoned by their owners. We have seen the abject failure and the total collapse of the existing legal framework and labour market institutions to protect the workers, their families and the resident garden economy.

After independence, India has followed been the policy of reservation of communities – scheduled caste, scheduled tribes and other backward communities in employment, education and in municipal, state and Lok Sabha Seats. Unfortunately in the case of plantation society and its economy, India as a postcolonial nation state has become – itself a conformity producing prism house which has revised and merely replicated, the old colonial division of social and economic consciousness. As a nation it has not been able to deal with economic, social disparities and inequities of the plantation society. It now needs to do a comprehensive dismantling of colonial hierarchies and structures which needs to be matched by a reformed and imaginative re-conception of the colonized plantation society and culture. It requires an enlightened intellectual consensus which refuses the short term blandishments of separatist and triumphalist slogan in favor of the larger, more generous human realities of community among cultures, peoples and societies. In other

The Significance of Land Rights to the Tea and Cinchona Plantation Workers and their Families

———— Neelkamal Chhetri



words, the stirring of independence can only be properly realized when the nation becomes more critical of itself. For this to happen it has to prove itself capable of directly attention to the abused rights of all oppressed classes especially the plantation society.

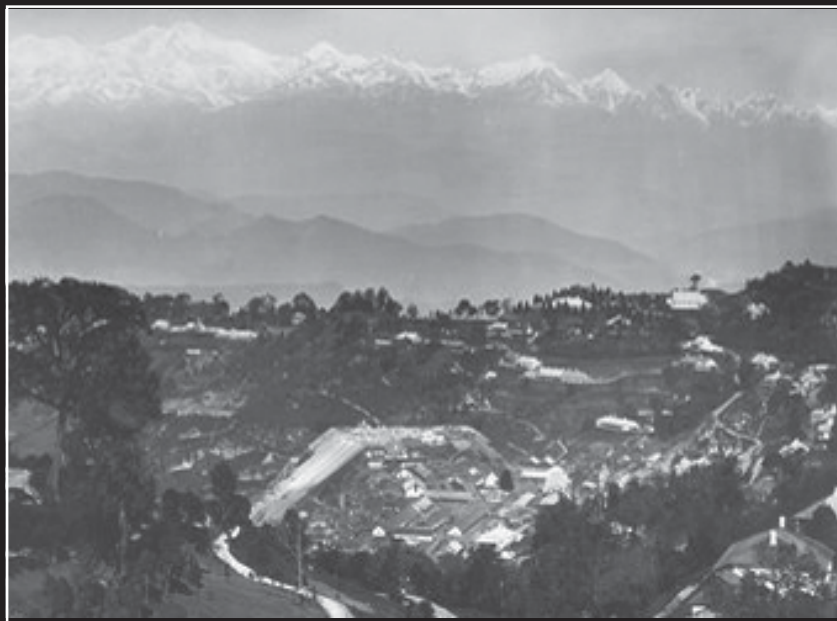
During the colonial period, labour was hired as Tea gardens were 'enclaves', alien and inward looking and cut off from all links with the outside given housing and incorporated into a new form of society, the pattern of which was dictated by the management of the plantation and designed solely to suit the needs of the plantations. The owners of the tea plantations behaved as the rulers of these principalities. Unfortunately even today the plantations have still remained an enclave and the owner's attitudes have remained the same.

Land lease Agreement:

The English leased out most of the land. While leasing out the land, they ensured that in Darjeeling, Terai and Dooars the only agricultural crop that could be grown was tea and this clause was put in the lease agreement signed. This was primarily done for revenue and profit maximization. Surprisingly this condition has continued today as can be seen from the West Bengal Land Lease agreement that the tea estate companies sign with the West Bengal Government. The present lease agreement that the tea companies sign with the Land and reform Department of West Bengal is more or less a carbon copy of the original lease agreement that the tea estates signed with the colonial administration. This agreement clearly states which commodity can be grown and they cannot the land to grow any other commodity nor can they use it for eco or tea tourism. For this they will have to sign another lease agreement. All this has led to a creation of a mono culture environment.

The Touzi Section deals with the control and supervision of all Tea gardens in the district of Darjeeling and Jalpaiguri as per the provisions of West Bengal Estates Acquisition ACT, 1953. This section realizes revenues in the form of land rent, penalty, fines payable by the tea garden to the collector. The other miscellaneous functions of the section are to grant permission for bringing virgin land under tea plantation, uprooting tea bushes, felling shade tress for the fuel wood, repair and construction of labour quarters and various other uses. All the tea gardens are leased out for a term of thirty years as per Form I, schedule F of the West Bengal Estate Acquisition Act, 1953.

The essence of these lease agreement and WBEA was and still is on revenue maximization. Nothing on development of the area, which is still the responsibility of the Plantation Company? At Colonial times there was no government elected by the Indian People. What



is surprising is that even after 62 years of Indian Independence, the role of the Indian Central and State governments are still on revenue maximization. On development issues it simply does not exist and has no role to play at all. Significantly when one dialogues with the tea worker they often use the word sarkar but when one probes further sarkar for them means the plantation company and not the state or the central government which is for you and me. Today the plantation society wallows in a culture of poverty totally devoid of social and human capital that is so essential for any society to develop socio-economically. This human development is so essential for the youth to integrate and benefit from the fast developing mainstream Indian Economy.

What is very surprising is that in the report of Committee on Legislation Plantation Sector 17th September 2007 chaired by Shri O P Arya, Additional Secretary, Department of Commerce, rejected the suggestion made by the industry that houses can be constructed under government sponsored schemes. Under housing schemes for the poor the houses can be built over the land on which there is an ownership right for the beneficiary. The houses so built belong to the beneficiary. The reason given this committee was that if the houses under this scheme are built, the ownership of land will have to be transferred to the worker which **will not be desirable for keeping the integrity of the plantation intact.**

Where as, in the case of Sanitation and Conservation, Tea Board, under its scheme of Labour Welfare is already providing some assistance for sanitation.

The Implementation of these existing and other legislations are so weak that it has allowed the some of the Tea Plantation companies to play around with the Provident Fund of the workers. It is estimated that crores of rupees are due to the tea garden workers in Darjeeling Doaars and Terai..

Tax Revenues Generated:

The tea plantation industry generates significant revenues – both in terms of foreign exchange and internal revenue through excise and sales tax. They are central excise, central sales tax primary education tax, agricultural tax, agricultural income tax, central income tax, land tax and land salami tax. The manufacturing dimension of tea is such that 60% percent of the tea income being treated as being treated as agricultural in character and the balance 40 percent being treated as industrial in nature.

Land Rights to the Tea Workers:

In Colonial Bengal, the British deemed the land not properly used and called in masses of people from outside the region to move, inhabit, work and “ultimately” improve the region. In the process they created the plantation as an enclave. Even today the plantation has remained an enclave.

Giving Land rights to the tea workers and their families will finally give them the social and economic benefits that has been denied to them from the time when the plantations were being developed. Surprisingly India as an independent nation has failed to provide them even after 62 years of Independence. Over the years it has created a Plantation culture where the youth there lacks the requisite human and social capital to benefit from the opportunities that the growing Indian economy offers and is creating.

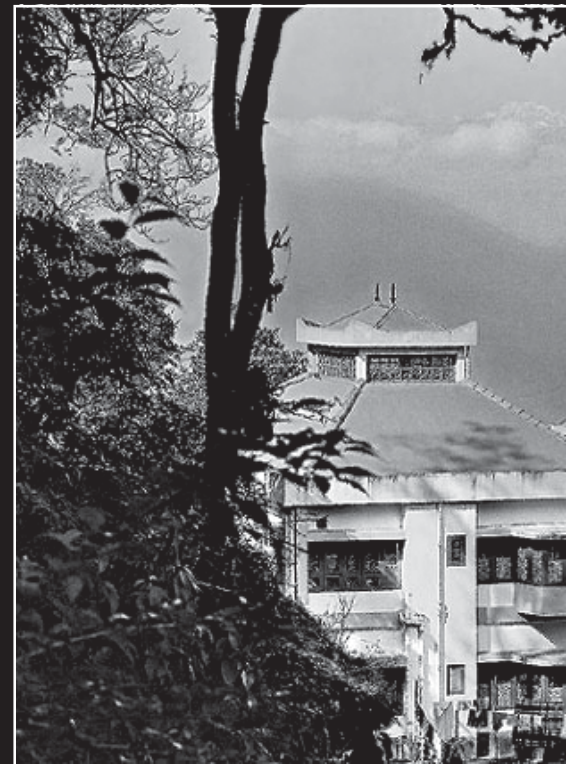
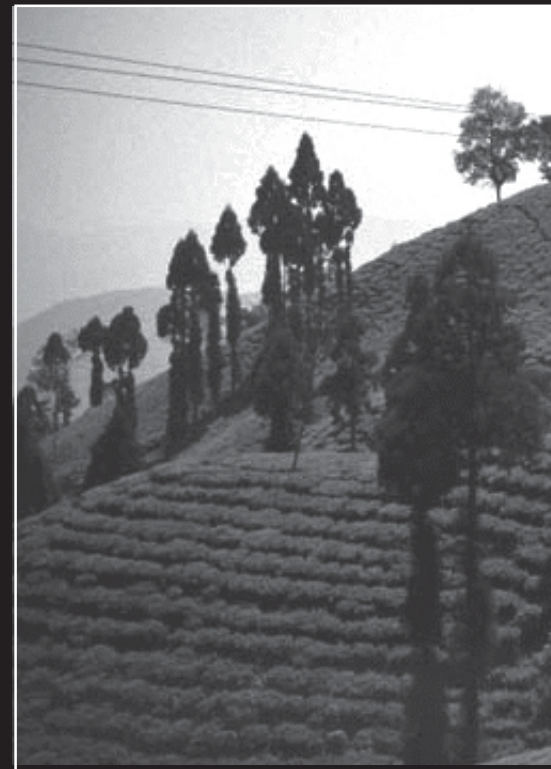
It will finally break the management of spaces in the plantation that were and still are meticulously charted, spoken for, inhabited by a hierarchy of master subject personages. It will be a first step towards integrating them to mainstream India and her economy. It will open opportunities to implement Central Government numerous rural development and livelihood schemes.

Plantation model of Post colonial and Independent India

The plantation model of the future has to one that has moved away from a master-subject, mono culture environment to the multi culture environment where the worker and his family supplements his income from the plantation through agriculture, allied industry or through the central government rural income generation and development schemes.

From colonial times the land tenure system has been such that plantation lands leased for Tea then only Tea can be cultivated. The time has come to relook at this land tenure system. We need to learn from progressive countries like Malaysia. Malaysian plantation industry is based on tree crops. Rubber was the dominant crop in the pre-independence era. Since independence in 1957 the plantation industry embarked on a crop-diversification program to help spread the risk inherent in the industry. The major crops today are oil palm, rubber, cocoa, coconut, tea and sugarcane. The new land tenure must allow crop diversification. This was also the recommendations of the McKinsey study on the Cinchona Plantation Industry on its revival and offer alternate livelihood systems.

Recently Tata Tea Ltd has initiated a very ambitious new model for their Tea plantations both in South and North India. In this model of theirs, the Tata's are co-opting the workers as shareholders of the new company that owns these plantations. This is a very interesting





concept where workers and their families become part owners of the company through their share holding. Presently the biggest challenge to the existing plantation system and the culture it has created over the years is to create amongst the workers a sense of ownership in the work they do and a sense of belonging. This attempt of the Tata's is to create this feeling and finally break the dependency syndrome that has been spawned over the generations.

The other model could be the one that is presently prevalent in the tea villages of Harsing Dabaipani and Yankhu. These tea villages were formerly Harrison Tea Estate, abandoned in 1960 and tea workers and their families were given land rights in the early eighties. They have painstakingly over the years managed to transform their monoculture environment to a multi-culture environment, where the resident garden society combines their agrarian skills, and supplements their income from the tea bushes. In the process their existing dependent mind-set has finally been re-invented into an independent mindset. Today their entire tea growing areas has been certified organically and along with tea, they grow cardamom, ginger etc.

Presently in the cinchona plantations, the worker supplements their daily income from the plantations by preening cinchona trees, through agriculture by growing cardamom, ginger and other crops. For generations the worker and their families are cultivating these crops in the land not being used for cinchona.

With the houses in their names, the educated un-employed dependents of the workers can offer homestays thus creating alternate livelihoods and income generation. Thus they can leverage from the fast growing homestay tourism a concept that is growing with the times. Mr. Rajah Bannejee of Makaibari Tea Estate, Kurseong has been offering homestay holidays for tourists in a number of his tea workers houses. Here the tourist lives and eats with the family and in the process experiences the community life, the tea estate and the production of the highly acclaimed and globally famous Makaibari Tea. This is very different to the tea tourism offered by other tea estates in the area where the tourist stays in one the colonial bungalows that have been converted into an ecolodge or a hotel.

In the plantation society of future, all the rural development schemes initiated by the Central Government have to be implemented so that workers and their dependents of the plantation society get the opportunity for their livelihood and income generations that people from other rural communities are benefitting presently.

One of the main challenges facing the industry, especially tea plantations is outmigration and chronic absenteeism of registered, resident plantations workers, a general aversion to the plantation labour in the villages, and the newly educated generation's disappointment on dignity of the job and their desire for a more fulfilling life outside the tea sector. The reasons are primarily a quest for better wages and status, but also better educational opportunities, access to child and medical care, more off-work time and amenities for leisure, and self-esteem, dignity and social acceptance. To address this issue, workers and their families need to be empowered. Providing them with land rights will empower the workers and address the key issues mentioned above by providing them with a sense of belonging.

A new development strategy must include land rights will therefore improve the economic access of the resident garden society; ensure that its proposed solutions are conducive to local milieus and are efficient in welfare-terms rather than merely in productivity terms, and that these bring economic productions into closer consonance with the natural ecosystems. In practice, such solutions demand social innovation by re-orienting economic activity towards human development rather than towards technological developments. Such innovation comprises the integration of formal with informal activity, proper utilization of resources and most importantly institutional responsiveness and adoption of technology appropriate to mountain areas where these tea gardens are located. ■

THE OTHER

By Ashif Ali

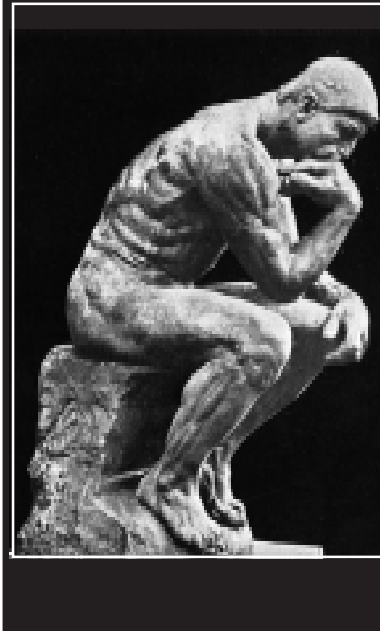
Who cares about morality, ethics & values? We are trapped in a matrix. A very thin line enveloped around 'us' and 'them', 'right' and 'wrong', 'rich' and 'poor', 'free market' and 'democracy'. Like an adolescent reflecting one's own self in the mirror, my understanding of morality is as unstable as that adolescent's social security, education, infrastructure, academics is all measured by the state which imparts morality. Am I 'right' or am I 'wrong', I do not seek an answer. This makes the world look better. I actually wanted to write about the youths in a post-colonial nation, but ended up compiling the ideas of writer, activities, lectures & seminars that I have been engaging myself with recently. The question is: are we a post-colonial, neo-colonial or still a colonial or still a colonial nation? To quote the Joker, "I am a dog chasing cars. I wouldn't know what to do with one if I caught it!" Some sense this 'Niszetean slave', trapped in a complex transnational state, where everyone is measured in term of G.D.P. is somehow wanting to break free – free from all social norms, ethical norms, judicial norms (a typical youth for you). Let me now share with you some of my concerns' in issues that I can not seem to let go.

Last night when I was taking a stroll down the street, I saw a wide spectrum of the so called 'poor' of our society sleeping in the street outside. For many ways it was a "moment of clarity" for me – here's a government who does not have enough space, infrastructure and shelter for its own people in the city, yet there is a massive ongoing process of displacement millions and millions of people through "developmental project. The Tribal areas are most affected. As I write now, people are being made to do so at gunpoint. Our home minister, P. Chidambaram was a former member of the Board of Directors in the Vendetta Group, a multinational mining co-operation owned by Anil Agrawal present living in a mansion that once belonged to the Shah of Iran), currently devastating the hills of Orissa. Mr. Chidambaram also a former co-operate lawyer represented many mining Corporations. He has a vision of getting 85% of the population living in the cities. This would mean about five hundred million people being displaced India quickly turning into a police state. I have nothing against development, but the question is whose development, whose progress are we inclined upon? Recently, in the Parliament the government submitted a report researched by the Tendulkar Committee appointed by the Planning Commission. The report said that the government had managed to bring the poverty level of the country down. One word. Absurd! This is where morality enters and ethics comes into – A pure violation of academic ethics on the part of the government and the committee.

According to the 1970 definition of poverty, as per the nutrition norms for a person to stay above the poverty line, an individual should have

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an intake of 2400 cal per day in urban areas and 2100 cal per day in rural areas. The report said that the poverty had come down from 15% to 9%. Not true. It's just that the government has reduced the intake of 2400 cal per day to 1800 cal per day. Incomes have been reduced from Rs. 800 to Rs. 325. This is how the poverty has come down. I wonder why there is a frenetic media focus only on one or two notions. I wonder whose development is it, stakeholders, may be.



Since the state liberation reform unemployment has shot up, the prices of raw materials have gone up 10 times. Ownership of the land by the farmers has gone down by 60% and massive reverse land reform through public policy is witnessed it was shocking when the Hon'ble Supreme Court of India when the Hon'ble Justice Kapadia refused to review the meaning of "public purpose" under the 'Land Acquisition Act', when the government was taking the land from the people in the name of "public purpose" and giving it to the private companies. The only sector that has benefited from the 'state reform' is the service sector; others have gone down to the dogs. India has the second highest growth rate, yet 2/3 of the population constitutes of farmer's suicide. Trade liberalization' has exposed farmers to the global price which is of course very volatile, plus it seeks a sharp decrease in the domestic prices. Where is our social security, provident fund for labourers, sick leaves, overtime payment, holidays (well if you are thinking of NREGA and the recent Right to food. Don't - a lollypop for the UPA). Enough of economics. Morally, it is we were talking about.

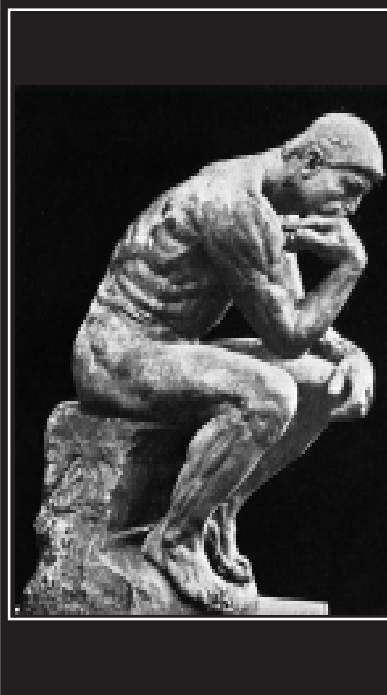
What can we derive from the last century? Freud's "Interpretation of Dreams". An unprecedented expansion of human subjectivity. Two world wars that brought in the concept of war as a legitimate means of state policy and diplomacy or the ravages of the new technological marvels from aeroplanes to antibiotics to computers. A new type of violence symbolized by nuclear weapons and concentration camps. Morally now becomes politics and politics enters the domain of the public. Ethics, on the other hand constitutes an individual domain. Murder is wrong we all know that but justified when the state awards a death penalty or right to abortion. Ethics on the other hand provides a relational measure in the context of the individual. Violence has made inroads in shaping the identity and individuality. At least 45 wars were fought in the past century and more than 200 million people have been killed.

They were accompanied by new technological, institutional and psychological skills that captured our creativity. The defense budget of many countries has overtaken the welfare budget 60% of all the scientist in the world are employed in defence research , directly or indirectly³ (Let's not even go into gender and queer issues). We after all inherit an evolution built on aggression. The idea of India itself is a very modern concept. Is the demise of colonialism complete? Or is it a neo-colonial state? Was there just a shift of political heads on 15th of August, 1947? I know not.

We are told that in the current capital of world capitalism in New York, 25% of all children and 50% of Afro-American children live in families with incomes below the official poverty line. About 40,000 homeless adults live in subways, streets, under bridges and train tunnels of the city. We are not talking about African nations or the third world; we are talking about the richest country, which according to estimates spend between 5,000 billion dollars and \$4 trillion only on nuclear rearmament. A clear picture of the relation between poverty and development. According to the Human Development Report of 1998, the three richest people in the world have wealth that exceeds the combined gross domestic products of the 48 least developed nations. One of them is an Indian, and instead of grimly talking of poverty all the while, many Indians have begun to celebrate such national achievement. Here they speak about our struggle, the indigenous people, tribal and Dalits as if we have no pasts, no myths, no legend, no transmittable system of knowledge, as if our grandparents told us no stories, as if our parents sang us no lullabies. Our past is stolen from us, paradoxically, to push us into the past – very similar to the 'white man's burden'. Simultaneously, the lifestyle that traditionally existed between the rich and the poor begin to disappear. Till quite recently, in some traditional parts of our land, the rich lived in bricks, stones or concrete houses, the poor lived in mud houses. The rich wore expensive clothes or western dresses. The poor had two sets of traditional clothes (they wore one set and washed the other, which suggests that they probably could stay clean). The rich ate well, the poorly, but they did eat. The meaning of poverty itself expands to include many kinds of lifestyle that another era would have qualified as a reasonably good one. ⁴ As the idea of 'normal' life changes so do the ideas of sub-normality and abnormality. These begin to include things that were once a part of normality. The problem arises when myths of permanent youth and immortality take over and we get busy keeping time at bay through cosmetics, tonics and fashionable technologies like cardiac bypasses which are mainly designed to bypass the fruits of overconsumption. Satish Kumar, a Jaina philosopher claims that poverty is not the problem-our idea of prosperity is.⁵

For long and in many cultures of the world, poor was not always the opposite of rich. The other considerations were falling from one's station in life, being deprived of one's instrument of labour, the loss of one's status or the mark of one's profession. Lack of profession, exclusion from one's community or public humiliation defined the poor. It was only after the expansion of mercantile economy, the process of

THE OTHER SIDE OF PROGRESS



urbanization leading to massive pauperization and, indeed, the monetization of society that the poor were defined as lacking what the rich could have in terms of money and possession. ⁶

As I said before-trapped in a matrix we are, a global underworld, a substratum of consciousness that defies at every step the mainstream culture of global economics. A condition is created by the exchange mechanism symbolized by money initiating a binary between sign and reality. On one hand, we are left with the split of the world into two and on the other we witness an absence of suspicion given "a priori"⁷ assumption where the logical two, ideas and parameters fail to give us an answer. For instance you can define developed but you cannot define underdeveloped without referring to the world developed. A de-constructive turn indeed, this has inaugurated the hermeneutics of suspect. "See there are morals, your codes.. it's a bad joke. Dropped at the first sign of trouble. They are only as good as the world allows them to be" said the Joker, wired into a globally dominant idea of what constitutes public life. All wired up into a historical mode of reasoning which I find very disturbing in my own little space. A de-constructionist examination of the ideological state apparatus where in the domain of knowledge is itself an object of critique, trapped in a matrix we are, where the Joker represents a Foucaultian model of reasoning, a global underworld, a substratum of consciousness that defies at every step the mainstream culture of global economics. According to Pascal: "Men are so necessarily mad, that not to be mad would amount to another form of madness." Whether it is a sub national struggle or our "concept" of our Nation itself, we need leaders like Abraham Lincoln, Nelson Mandela, Martin Luther King, Che Guevara, Mao Se Tung and Aung San Suu Kyi, people who are something more than just political leaders: Leaders not just for development but for the people. Leaders beyond good and evil. Leaders who stood up not just for human rights but for social justice.■

¹ F.n

² Arundhati Roy's essay Chidambaram's War. Nov 16, 2009. Outlook. Listening to Grasshoppers. She says, "soon-to-be-published

work. Out of This Earth: East India Adivasis and the Aluminum Cartel, Samarendra Das and Felix Padel say that the financial value of the bauxite deposits of Orissa alone is 2.27 trillion dollars. (More than twice India's Gross Domestic Product). That was at 2004 prices. At today's prices it would be about 4 trillion dollars. A trillion has 12 zeroes."

³ Ashis Nandy, Time Treks – The Uncertain Future of Old and New Despotism: The twentieth century (pub. Permanent Black, 2007) pp. 2-11

⁴ Ashis Nandy. Time Treks – The Beautiful and Expanding Future of Poverty. (Permanent Black, 2007) pp. 93-113.

⁵ Satish Kumar, 'Poverty and Progress', Resurgence, September-October 1999, p6; and John Gary, 'The myth of Progress' ibid., 11-13, are only two of the most recent writers who have emphasized this old formulation.



RHODODENDRONS

OPEL AND FOOTBALL

■ Nayan Prakash Subba.

Way back in 1951, one morning, my grandfather Lall Singh Subba bundled me off with my sister Ratna and brother Divya to Kalimpong to live with my uncle and aunt. My grandfather had hired a taxi which was an old Opel car driven by Shillongay a quiet, dark and quaint looking gentleman. We boarded the vehicle at the two-pillar Gate of Little Singamari, a beautiful bungalow owned by my Granddad.

The car had rich leather upholstery, clean and shining windscreens, a dashboard with indicator lights and meters, which cast a magic spell over us. I can still smell the exotic odour of the buttoned upholstery, which softly squeaked when one sat down. Although my grandfather was a strict disciplinarian and a no nonsense man I felt sad to leave him when he bid us farewell with moist eyes. Ever since the death of my father in 1947 he had been looking after us. My grandma had died long time ago in Kalimpong and her last wish was to be buried near the Ging

monastery at Darjeeling. She was carried all the way from Kalimpong to Ging; she lies peacefully in the pristine surroundings. My father C.M. Subba who died in the 1st of January 1947 and my dear wife Keshari who died in 2nd July 1974 have been laid to rest in our own little God's acre in the same place. Shillongay cranked the engine with a stroke of the handle, took his seat, revved the engine two or three times and we were off.

It was one of those magical days in Darjeeling where the sun shone bright and the air was crisp and invigorating. The car sped past Thutey bazaar (Bhanugram); the Darjeeling Govt. College, the old British Cemetery and approached the bazaar area. The bazaar was quite crowded; it





must have been a hat day. A square wooden speaker perched on top of Municipal 'D' Building near Geetangay Danra was blaring out a Hindi hit song 'Khayalon mein kisi ke' from the film 'Bawre Nain'. The atmosphere seemed to be festive and happy. My late sister Ratna who used to be a Hindi film buff immediately broke into song and started singing along with the tune. A gentleman who was travelling with us who looked like Van Gogh's Pere Tanguay, but perhaps not as kind as him, sneered at Ratna and passed some unkind remarks at her. In those days it was not only fashionable to condemn Hindi songs but it was even considered evil to see Hindi films.

We crossed Jorebangalow and proceeded towards the third mile where we saw flashes of rhododendron trees here and there. As soon as we negotiated the bend of Bagh Hitti -Lo! And Behold! We saw rows and rows of Rhododendrons mingled with pines and Camellias, as if someone had painted the whole forest with breathtaking hues of red, pink, green and white colours. Further down the hill-slopes the scenery changed and we saw enchanting views of shady forests. Birds waltzed along at every twist and turn and some, restlessly fluttered among the lofty trees. Finally we caught a glimpse of the blue-green waters of the mighty Teesta, which looked awesomely beautiful along the deeply wooded forests. After some time we reached the splendid Teesta Anderson Bridge. The bridge was unfortunately washed away during the severe floods of 1968. Old-timers say that the boom created by the crash of the bridge was heard miles away. A fearsome wall of water slammed on both sides of the hill and tossed houses like cardboard boxes.

The road from Teesta bazaar to Kalimpong town had a tough gradient. The old Opel car growled, whined and

shrieked at the effort. Shillongay who hadn't spoken a word so far started to chatter and jabber. He even broke into a song 'It's a long way to Tipperary'. The short break at Teesta bazaar had done him a lot of good. No prizes for guessing why. The engine overheated only once when the car came to a halt with a jiggety jig. Fresh water was poured into the radiator and with a swipe of the handle the powerful engine started and off we went. Shillongay fondly patted the car and said proudly, "After all this is an Opel".

As newcomers, excitement mounted as Kalimpong town neared. The Macfarlane Memorial Church stood imposingly on a ridge and there was a sudden alien burst of activity as I absorbed the jingle jangles of Tibetan ponies, bullock carts, donkeys, horses and lots of dust; even the people looked quite different, nevertheless, it was an exhilarating experience for a kid on the threshold of his teens. As soon as the car reached Thana danra Shillongay swerved left and honked two or three times, people with children, baskets and vegetables ran helter skelter among the trees to save themselves from the approaching monster. It was the only car in the main street of Kalimpong town. I came to know much later that the main street in the town was laid in boulevard style (see photographs) with trees on both sides. A few trees were still there in the late fifties, they all vanished without a trace during the sixties. At last the car came to a dusty halt at Kalimpong Motor Stand where my late uncle Rattan Singh Subba had come to receive us. Shillongay handed over our baggage; we thanked him for the memorable drive. He seemed to be in a hurry. He mumbled something incoherently and quickly disappeared into a street silhouetted against the western skies. Perhaps, another tryst with Bacchus, the great God of wine was in the offing.

In the early fifties Kalimpong town was the booming commercial capitol of the Indo-Tibetan trade. 10th Mile not only looked like a street in the Wild West it also harboured gambling dens, bars, rouge smeared ladies and lots and lots of money. Fierce looking Tibetan businessmen in broad rimmed hats with swords dangling from their sides walked the streets like Hollywood professional

gunfighters. Fights and stabbings for the battle of supremacy among the toughies was a regular feature. Indeed it was a formidable street to cross.

The evening air was mixed with the fragrance of smoke made out of dried Tibetan juniper twigs and azaleas, Indian sandalwood incense, horse dung and urine and the acrid smell of Tongba and Rakshi (local beverages). Temple bells, the sound of conchshells, Buddhist prayers, the singing of Bhanubhakta's Ramayana and houses lit by hurricane lanterns completed the picture.

There was only one thing that beat this furtive grasp for the greenbacks. The people of Kalimpong were bewitched by the sorcery of soccer. Great games were played and some never forgotten. One such game was played between the Ex Army XI and Dr.Graham's Homes School. Both the teams had star-studded players. George Patterson or the Dariwalla, Dhambu, Natan Gauluk and others represented the Homes whilst the Ex Army had stalwarts like Mohammad Hazi, Lam Singh, S.D. Kazi and the unparalleled Thomas.

There was tension right from the beginning. No amount of words could describe the electrifying atmosphere. Thousands of fans had thronged the terraced stadium of the Mela ground. Most of the spectators were supporters of the Ex Army team except for a few senior boys who had come down to cheer their school team. A couple of good passes and some neat dribbling after the kick-off indicated of things to come. Suddenly Patterson of Dr.Graham's Homes, blocks a pass and takes control of the ball, dribbles past two Army defenders in quick succession, and shoots. The ball finds its mark. School students roll and tumble in the pitch with happiness. There is a scramble for possession in the midfield. A fleet footed

forward of the Homes breaks through; the ball is slightly out of control, Thomas intercepts and cracks the ball sky high into eternity. There is an overwhelming roar of appreciation from the crowd. The ball is trapped by Lam Singh who dazzles it like a magician and shoots past the Homes custodian. Ex Army supporters go mad with frenzy and ecstasy. The Ex Army team could never lose. A ding-dong battle for supremacy ensues. Lemon Time.

Shortly after half time a barefooted Homes' forward wiggles himself out of a melee near the penalty arc and let's loose a booming right footer, the ball hits the net before the goalie can move. Schoolboys jump, dance and scream with delight. Homes lead 2-1. The Army team strives grimly to equalize and continuously raid the Homes territory. A player from Homes finds space, moves forward and shoots a 20 yard stinger, the ball is caught by the Army goalkeeper in a chest trap, his chest sounds like a timpani drum. Now, Mohammad Hazi in devastating speed and phenomenal ball control slams the ball convincingly, beating the goalkeeper but the ball unfortunately hits the right side of the crosspiece and bounces back. Lam Singh who was lining up to shoot the rebounder is declared offside by the Referee. All Hell breaks loose. The irate Ex Army fans abuse the Referee with all sorts of names. 'Thief', 'Bribe taker', 'Jackass', 'Pi dog', 'Fornicator', 'Son of a whore' etcetera. The Referee, Late Sonam Wangdi a burly, tough hunk of a man stops the game with a long burst of the whistle and challenges a vociferous section of the crowd in the Northwestern flank of the ground. He lets loose an amazing vocabulary of Nepali abuses which pales in contrast to the filthiest words used by the crowd. Ladies cover their faces with shawls, people squirm in discomfort and a shocked silence ensues. Thus with dignity and honour restored, the Referee re-starts the Game, not without warning the crowd about their despicable behaviour and utter lack of decency.

The match after halftime is played entirely on the Homes side but The Ex Army forwards fail to get past the barrier created by the legendary deep defence (Backs) Dhambu and Natan. Time runs out, the gloom spreads, fans lose hope



In the early fifties Kalimpong town was the booming commercial capitol of the Indo-Tibetan trade. 10th. Mile not only looked like a street in the Wild West it also harboured gambling dens, bars, rouge smeared ladies and lots and lots of money. Fierce looking Tibetan businessmen in broad rimmed hats with swords dangling from their sides walked the streets like Hollywood professional gunfighters. Fights and stabbings for the battle of supremacy among the toughies was a regular feature. Indeed it was a formidable street to cross.

and start moving out of the Stadium to avoid the humiliation of seeing their team lose, the impossible has happened. The invincible team has lost. Victory is within the grasp of the Homes team but in the dying seconds of the game a direct free kick is awarded to the Ex Army against the Homes for tripping an opponent. The distance is about thirty yards from the goalpost. Even a hardcore optimist would have thought that this was quite impossible. All eyes fall on Thomas a handsome and sturdy Hillman. He proceeds slowly towards the stationary ball and adjusts it. He goes back for the strike, deep in concentration and thought. The tension is unbearable. He looks towards the goal, bursts into a sprint and smacks it from the distance. It resounds like a muzzle report of a Colt 45. The trajectory of the ball travels as straight as a bullet, which flies into the net followed by a thunderous applause, which rent the skies. Coats, handkerchiefs, shirts, hats and socks are thrown up into the air with happiness. On the field – Thomas trots back to his side visibly relieved and happy unconcerned about the adulation of the crowd. The replay was scheduled two days later, but that is another story.

On the 7th of January, 2000 K.B. Gurung and I trudge up the cobbled path leading to the house of Mr. Thomas across the beautiful buildings of Don Bosco at Pedong. Mr. Thomas comes down from his bedroom and receives us with a genuine smile. He introduces us to his wonderful family members. He is remarkably alert mentally and physically at the age of 85 and regaled us with soccer stories from the mid forties to the early fifties. He expressed his unhappiness about the present state of affairs and wanted the players to be more hardworking and dedicated. There were times that he used to walk 22 kilometres from Pedong to Kalimpong just to play a match for his team. Before bidding goodbye I asked him one last question about the fabulous goal against the Homes. For a fleeting moment there was a hint of a smile barely perceptible, and then his face suddenly gleams in delight and says, "You couldn't have asked for a more perfect shot. It happens once in many many games."

Rhododendrons around the corner of the road that burst forth like a painter's palette; cars that promise to reach you to strange destinations and football games that are carried within your heart to reflect upon misty evenings. Treasured memories indeed. ■

FOOD FOR YOUR THOUGHTS



If you think you are
unhappy....
Think of them....



If you think you are
suffering....
How about him????



If you feel
society is unfair
to you....
How about
her????



DOES YOUR
PARENTS
CARE'TIRE
YOU???



THEY DON'T
HAVE ANY...



If you think your salary
is low....
Think of her....



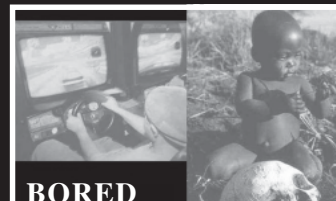
If you are fed up with
your traffic system....
How about them????



HATE
VEGGIES???



THEY STARVE
FROM HUNGER



BORED
OF THE
SAME
GAME???



THEY DON'T
HAVE ANY
OPTION....



If you think you are
lonely.....
Think of him....



If you are feeling like
giving up....
Think of this him????



DOES STUDYING
ANNOY YOU???



NOT THEM...



ARE'T YOU
GRATEFUL FOR
YOUR BED???



THEY'D
WISH NOT
TO WAKE UP

Ginkgo Biloba Trees

By Devendra Dahal

The scientific name for these plants, *Ginkgo biloba*, is more commonly used than the common name, "maidenhair-trees." An alternate spelling is, "gingko biloba." Ginkgo biloba trees are broadleaf, deciduous trees. They are also dioecious.

Characteristics of Ginkgo Biloba Jurassic to recent

Ginkgo is a genus of highly unusual non-flowering plants with one extant species, *G. biloba*, which is regarded as a living fossil. Fossils recognisably related to modern *Ginkgo* date back to the Permian, some 270 million years ago. The genus diversified and spread throughout Laurasia during the middle Jurassic and Cretaceous, but became much rarer thereafter. While it may seem improbable that a species may exist as a contiguous entity for many millions of years, many of the Ginkgo's life-history parameters fit. These are: extreme longevity; slow reproduction rate; (in Cenozoic and later times) a wide, apparently contiguous, but steadily contracting distribution

coupled with, as far as can be demonstrated from the fossil record, extreme ecological conservatism (being restricted to light soils around rivers); and a low population density.

Growing Ginkgo Biloba Trees for cities and town streets or people's yards, the **male** trees are preferred. Female trees bear a fruit-like product which, after dropping on a street or driveway, not only emits a foul odor, but is also slippery. The fruit is about the size of a cherry tomato. "Autumn Gold" is a popular male cultivar.

Ginkgo biloba trees reach 50'-80' in height, with a spread of 30'-40'. Their uniquely fan-shaped leaves start out green but morph into a golden fall foliage. Before the whole leaf turns golden, there's sometimes a stage that I especially enjoy, during which the leaf is two-toned, with separate bands of gold and green. Ginkgo biloba trees are attractive enough to function as specimen plants, particularly because of their golden fall foliage.

Ginkgo biloba trees are disease-resistant and tolerate urban pollution. The latter quality make them sensible choices for planting along city streets, where they can grow into tall shade trees. At the other end of the spectrum, Ginkgo biloba trees are also used for Japanese bonsai

Ginkgo Biloba Tree at Chandra Kumar Pradhan Park in Kalimpong:

(The Ginkgo biloba tree is suffering literally crucified with "No smoking banners, wooden posters with details of the tree itself and other notices stuck by five to six inches nails, which to my knowledge shall expedite the death of this rare species' due to ignorance and sheer negligence of duty on the part of concerned caretakers)

"The ginkgo is the oldest tree in the world," states Botanical-Online,

noting that Ginkgo biloba trees are the lone survivor of a "family that existed more than 200 million years ago" and kept company with the dinosaurs in many parts of the world. However, Ginkgo biloba trees eventually vanished in most regions.

In historical times, the Ginkgo biloba tree's origin is the Far East. The Ginkgo Pages Web site relates that Ginkgo biloba trees had survived in China, where they were mainly found in monasteries "in the mountains and in palace and temple gardens, where Buddhist monks cultivated the tree from about 1100 AD for its many good qualities." Plant collectors from the West eventually were sold on Ginkgo biloba trees and brought specimens home.

The tree's "good qualities" included medicinal and culinary uses, exploited for centuries in both China and Japan. Roasted nuts from Ginkgo biloba trees have long been considered a delicacy in their native China. The trees medicinal qualities are now recognized in the West, too. Treatment for short-term memory loss is just one of many medicinal uses for the extract derived from the leaves of Ginkgo biloba trees. ■



DIGITAL LIBRARY

MYTH OR REALITY

Historically, libraries have made great contribution to human civilization by providing knowledge and information. The libraries of the early times were collection of writings for use of the mankind. Such libraries were found in the early civilizations such as in Egypt, Mesopotamia, Palestine, Crete etc., So the people during the early period preserved their records on material such as clay tablets of the palace of King Sennacherib of Assyria, 704-681 B.C., the papyrus sheets used by the Egyptians and finally to printing of books by Gutenberg in mid – 1400's. The library is a growing organism and is in a state of metamorphosis where libraries today provide not only books but also microform, disc records, audiotapes, motion picture films, slides, film-strips, models, realia, etc.,

The library today cannot function and survive only with its traditional services in this digital age where new technologies have tremendous impact over the human life and the society at large. Now-a-days libraries are facing the problems of the ever-increasing number of documents and the astronomical growth of information and problems of organization of knowledge and their management. The documents at the same time appear in various formats such as books and non-books, printed and non-printed, published and unpublished, graphic and audiovisuals etc. Hence databases should be created for collection, storage, retrieval and dissemination of information. So digitization of libraries is necessary taking into account of various works such as cataloguing, membership records, library statistics, financial control, and accounts can be done by computer application.

Digital libraries provide access to electronic information to various locations through a local online catalogue or other gateway like the



By Dipendra Raya Chettri

internet. Digital library services speed up the process of organizing information and knowledge in digital form so as to deliver information economically to various sectors of the society. As a result of these various types of digital library services have emerged such as:

- WWW Virtual Library ➤ Clearinghouse
- Subject Gateway ➤ Gateway
- Portal ➤ Vortal ➤ Internet Resource Catalogue

For better library services the telecommunications and computer industry have devised various ways for data processing, data storage and data transmission. DIALOG, BRS, PERGAMON/INFOLINE, ESA/IRS, STN international are some of the online service providers using databases. These electronic databases store a huge amount of information for retrieval by users.

Internet now-a-days lets anyone to have access to digital information and also send anything digital to anyone in any part of the world. Today libraries have access to internet and it is developing towards a digital society.

CD-ROM has revolutionized the educational process and has also changed the traditional libraries. The largest data memories are CD-ROMs for a commercial PC application. CD-ROM's Electronic Publishing facilities one to build, circulate and enhance one's library materials into knowledge-base faster and more easily than with paper. Hence it is easy to search and retrieve information quickly using indexing and retrieval software with an electronic documents database.

The age-old concept of library as a store-house of knowledge and the librarians as their custodians have undergone a modification in the digital world. The libraries should provide a high quality information system and services by the utilization of digital technology. Librarians should also re-educate themselves to meet this new challenge. The librarian should preserve the information and allow democratic access to information. He would also be the link between information scientists and the users. He would also ensure that the wares that he has are efficiently and easily used by functioning as a broker of information.

The digital library and its services would certainly be vital in this modern age and will certainly be an important issue in the ages to come. The mythical "paperless library" is a debatable topic and a dream yet to be materialized. The paper from the day of its birth has served the human civilization though it is considered as a second class citizen in the digital world. But the modern trend has integrated both the paper-based and electronic information. Considering the physical properties of paper, it is easy to use, transport and preserve. So even in an electronic library paper may be considered to be an important form of reading and writing medium. ■

Third in the series on the history of the Darjeeling Hills, this article gives the readers of Himalayan Times an extract from the Government of India Act of 1935 with regards to Excluded and Partially Excluded areas. The Darjeeling Area was an Excluded Area till this Act came into effect and thereafter it was classified as a Partially Excluded Area.

EXTRACT FROM THE GOVERNMENT OF INDIA ACT, 1935

CHAPTER V EXCLUDED AREAS AND PARTIALLY EXCLUDED AREAS

91-(1) In this expressions “excluded area” and “Partially excluded area” means respectively such area as His Majesty may by ORDER IN Council, Declare to be excluded areas or partially excluded areas.

The Secretary of State shall lay the draft of the Order which it is proposed to recommend His Majesty to make under this sub-section before Parliament within six months from the passing of this Act.

(2) His Majesty may at any time by Order in Council –

(a) Direct that the whole or any specified part of, an excluded area shall become, or become part of, a partially excluded areas;

(b) direct that the whole or any specified part of a partially excluded area shall cease to be a partially excluded area or a part such an area;

(c) alter, by only by way of rectification of boundaries, any excluded or partially excluded area;

(d) on any alteration of the boundaries of a Province, or the creation of a new Province declare any territory not previously included in any Province to be, or to form part of, an excluded area or a partially excluded area, and any such Order may contain such incidental and consequential provisions as appear to His Majesty to be necessary and proper, but save as aforesaid the Order in Council made under subsection (1) of this section shall not varied any subsequent Order.

92.(1) The executive authority of a Province extends to excluded and partially excluded areas therein but, notwithstanding anything in this Act. No



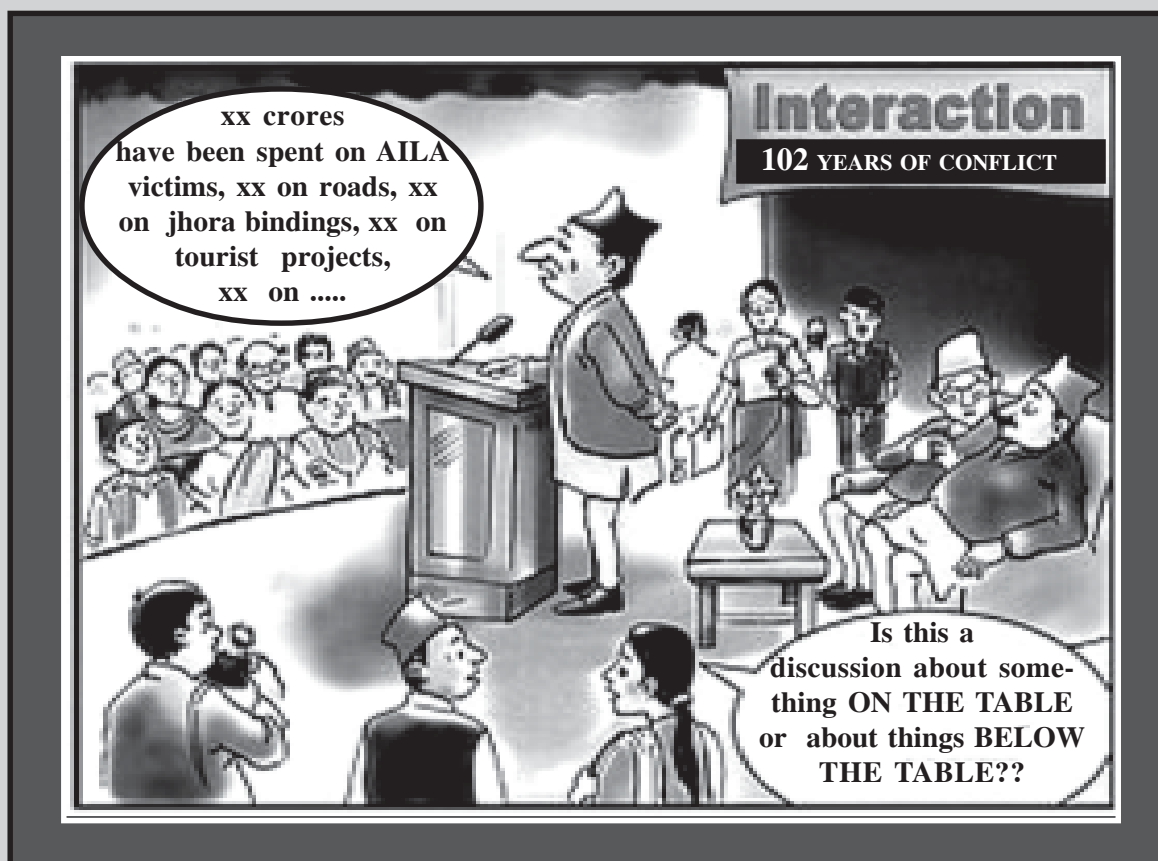
The executive authority of a Province extends to excluded and partially excluded areas therein but, notwithstanding anything in this Act. No Act the Federal Legislature or of the Provincial Legislature shall apply to an excluded area or a partially excluded area, unless the Governor by public notification so directs, and the Governor in giving such a direction with respects to any Act may direct that the Act shall in its application to that area, or to any specified part thereof, have effects subject to such exceptions or modifications as he thinks fit.

Act the Federal Legislature or of the Provincial Legislature shall apply to an excluded area or a partially excluded area, unless the Governor by public notification so directs, and the Governor in giving such a direction with respects to any Act may direct that the Act shall in its application to that area, or to any specified part thereof, have effects subject to such exceptions or modifications as he thinks fit.

(2) the Governor may make regulations for the peace and good Government of any area in a Province which is for the time being an excluded area, or a partially excluded area, and any regulations so made may repeal or amend any Act of the Federal Legislature or of the Provincial Legislature, or any existing Indian law, which is for the time being applicable to the area in question.

Regulations made under this sub-section shall be submitted forthwith to the Governor-General and until assented to by him his direction shall have no effect, and the provisions of this Part of this Act with respect to the power of His Majesty to disallow Acts shall apply in relation to any such regulations assented to by the Governor-General as the they apply in relation to Acts of a Provincial Legislature assented to by him.

(3) The Governor shall, as respects any area in a Province which is for the time being an excluded area, exercise his functions in his discretion. ■



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EXPRESSIONS

And when I die....

By Ian C Masson

The thought that one day I will die
Makes me live every moment
and every breath of life that I have.

I have seen a lot
and I have lived most of them,
But I have learnt to smile at
All of them....

Sure, there were times
Of heightened joys and cloudless skies;
There were times of tearing pains
when moments seemed vain.
But that was life of the good and bad
Like the time of day and night.

I live, I learn, I smile,
I weep, I suffer
but all within me....

In memory of Late Ian C. Masson and his daughter
Late Mrs. Lydia Mukhia.....



Help this young footballer find the net

JUMBLE JUMBLE JUMBLE



Help this Olympic flame reach the
Olympic Stadium



Draw this three crossing square pattern with pencil in one continuous line so that you don't take the pencil point off the paper. You are not allowed to go over any part of the line twice, or even cross it.

Right to Information

When does it come into force?

It comes into force on the 12th October, 2005 (120th day of its enactment on 15th June, 2005). Some provisions have come into force with immediate effect viz. obligations of public authorities [S.4(1)], designation of Public Information Officers and Assistant Public Information Officers[S.5(1) and 5(2)], constitution of Central Information Commission (S.12 and 13), constitution of State Information Commission (S.15 and 16), non-applicability of the Act to Intelligence and Security Organizations (S.24) and power to make rules to carry out the provisions of the Act

Who is covered?

The Act extends to the whole of India except the State of Jammu and Kashmir.

What does information mean?

Information means any material in any form including records, documents, memos, e-mails, opinions, advices, press releases, circulars, orders, logbooks, contracts, reports, papers, samples, models, data material held in any electronic form and information relating to any private body which can be accessed by a public authority under any other law for the time being in force but does not include "file notings".

What does Right to Information mean?

It includes the right to -

- inspect works, documents, records.
- take notes, extracts or certified copies of documents or records.
- take certified samples of material.
- obtain information in form of printouts, diskettes, floppies, tapes, video cassettes or in any other electronic mode or through printouts.

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Professor Richard Keith Sprigg is a person well known to the academics of Kalimpong and the surrounding areas. What is generally not known is that he was absolutely thorough in whatever he did. I once sent him a short study on the meanings of names of some places in the district for his opinion and what I got back was well over twice my input. He had consulted dictionaries, met people who taught Nepali, Hindi, Bengali and even consulted Lepcha elders before coming to any conclusion. He was that thorough. He lived for many years in Ahava Cottage at Dr. Graham's Homes and his residence became a lodestone for linguists and historians from all over the Himalayan region and places further afar. People came to top his vast knowledge of Tibeto-Burman languages and related subjects. In 1955, while with the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS), London, he arrived in Kathmandu with several photocopies of some manuscripts preserved at the India Office Library, London. The documents formed a part of Brian H. Hodgson's collection made in Darjeeling and Nepal in the early 1840s. It was believed that the documents were in the Limbu script

A Thorough Man

Dr. R. K. Sprigg
By Dr.S.B. Wangyel

but there was no one in English could read them and Sprigg had arrived in Kathmandu to find someone who could. The following account will illustrate his thoroughness in finding a reader and the follow up to it.

At Kathmandu he met Tilbahadur Limbu and Col. B. Chemjong, both highly respected and educated Limbus, but they were none the wiser at reading the manuscript. They suggested that Kaziman Kandhanga of Ghoom Pahar, Darjeeling, could possibly shed some light on the matter. After sometimes the Professor was at Ghoom but Kaziman too was helpless save for another address he provided: Iman Singh Chemjong at Ilam, Nepali. To decide in the next course of action he went to the tranquil settings of Kalimpong and made the Himalayan Hotel his base. There he thought he would find success in the Limbu School but the Limbu masters at Dungra Busti Jambok Memorial School were no more knowledgeable than the previous contacts. Here someone once again suggested that Iman Singh Chemjong could possibly be the appropriate person. This was the second time the name had cropped up. A small bit of research revealed that Chemjong had worked in Sikkim the previous year and so Sprigg went there to find out if the man had the required knowledge to be worth the chase. T.D. Densapa, a respected scholar and a senior bureaucrat of Sikkim, confirmed that Chemjong had worked in the Revenue Department of Sikkim and was able to read and write in a script that was similar to the ones in the photocopies. There was at least some hope now but there were several big problems for the Professor: Ilam was difficult of access, a foreigner needed special permission to enter the place, he was told that there were no hotels there, and if he at all got to Ilam there was no guarantee that Chemjong would be able to read the photocopies, a likely outcome especially after the three previous failures from dependable sources. Chemjong's address was found and it was decided to invite Chemjong to Kalimpong. After sometime Chemjong arrived. Yes, he could read

the script and to the baffling question of why the others could not do was that the scripts had been revised and improved upon by no other than Chemjong himself. All the others were following Chemjong's alterations and were clueless about the original primitive script. I might add here that the script has undergone further modifications to make it computer compatible. Further additions in like punctuation marks have been included and in the future there may be more additions with the introduction of diacritic marks. Anyway, that is looking far too ahead and let us go back to the past. In the short time that Sprigg spent with Chemjong, he learnt to read and write the Sirijonga script. Sometime later the Professor, along with his wife – a Kalimpong lady – went to the Limbu heartland of Ilam to actually live with the Limbus. This was no easy job for a European not used to answering nature's call in the open and on missing out on egg and toast for breakfast and some wine at dinner. But the call of language something new was too strong to cast aside. At Ilam he learnt the Limbu language and the way the Limbus lived while his wife, not equally academically inclined, spent her hours teaching the women folks how to knit sweaters, socks, muffins and gloves: something the Limbu women had never seen or done before. In 1989 Sprigg reviewed for the SOAS 'A Grammar of Limbu' by Professor George van Driem and in between made contributions like "Phonological formulae for the verb in Limbu" (1966), "The Limbu s-final and t-final verb roots" (1984), and he even wrote the Foreword for WHR Senior's of "A Vocabulary of Limbu Language of Eastern Nepal." ■



The Dandy walas of Darjeeling in earlier times who used to carry passengers and goods to & from Darjeeling

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